

TRIP REPORT:
HAITI
MARCH 2010



Three Members of the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) traveled to Haiti on March 5, 2010, as part of a congressional delegation to meet with Haitian and U.S. officials following the devastating earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince two months prior. HDP Chairman David Price (D-NC), Ranking Member David Dreier (R-CA), and Rep. Donald Payne (D-NJ) accompanied six other House Members on a delegation led by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA). Their visit followed HDP visits to Haiti in February 2007 and May 2009. The delegation met with Haitian President René Préal, Senate President Kély Bastien, U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Merten, and USAID and embassy officials.

The delegation began its five-hour visit with a driving tour of central Port-au-Prince to gain a first-hand understanding of the devastation that struck the capital on January 12, 2010. Members saw the gutted cathedral and the collapsed National Palace among countless destroyed buildings. The delegation visited the site of the destroyed Petit Séminaire College Saint-Martial, a school for 1,400 students, and observed a USAID program that pays laborers \$5 a day to help clear rubble, getting money into residents' hands so they can purchase necessities. USAID and other donors have also ensured that sanitation facilities and shelter are available before the rainy season begins on May 1.

In its meeting with President Préal, the delegation expressed its condolences for the tremendous loss of life in Haiti and noted the strong support in the United States and in the Congress for the Haitian people. Elections for the Haitian National Assembly were scheduled to be held on February 28 but were postponed indefinitely in the wake of the earthquake. Observing that the terms expire on May 8 for all 99 members of the Chamber of Deputies and 10 of the 30 senators, Reps. Price and Dreier encouraged President Préal to organize elections as soon as possible. Rep. Dreier noted that the United States had considered the question of continuity of government in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks, and he told President Préal that it was important to give the Haitian people a role in choosing their leaders. The President acknowledged the importance of having a legitimately elected parliament, and he indicated that he is inclined to hold parliamentary and presidential elections concurrently, prior to the expiration of his term in February 2011.



Reps. Payne, Price, Dreier and Lofgren meet with Haitian Senate President Kély Bastien.

Before departing Port-au-Prince, the delegation met at the airport with Senate President Bastien to express the solidarity of the Congress with the Haitian National Assembly. Mr. Bastien, who was trapped in the destroyed Senate building and suffered a broken hip and a lacerated thigh, thanked the Members for their support. He noted that 19 senators will continue to serve after May 8, providing continuity for the legislature, and he expressed his support for holding legislative and presidential elections together in November 2010.

For more information about the House Democracy Partnership, please contact the HDP office at (202) 226-1641 or visit <http://democracy.house.gov>.